

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 LONDON 14814 01 OF 02 132207Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-10
NSAE-00 DODE-00 MCE-00 ACDA-12 NSCE-00 SSO-00
INRE-00 PA-01 ICAE-00 L-03 /061 W
-----125320 132223Z /12

O R 132156Z SEP 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9975
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE
USNMR SHAPE
CINCUSAFE
USDOCOSOUTH

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 14814

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: NATO, MPOL
SUBJECT: DEPLOYMENT OF A-10 STABALLOY MUNITIONS

REF: (A) STATE 229063 DTG 090139Z SEP 78
(B) LONDON 14548 DTG 091248Z SEP 78

1. SUMMARY: MOD TOLD STATE-DEFENSE BRIEFING TEAM THAT IT WOULD REQUIRE 30 DAYS TO SMOOTH THE WAY FOR MINISTERS' CLEARANCES OF STABALLOY DEPLOYMENT. TEAM POINTED OUT DANGER OF PREMATURE DISCLOSURE AND MOD OFFERED TO ATTEMPT TO REDUCE PROCESS TO 15 DAYS. CLEARANCE BY SEPT 16 SHIP ARRIVAL IS NOT POSSIBLE. MOD BELIEVES DANGER OF PREMATURE DISCLOSURE IS OUTWEIGHED BY POSSIBILITY THAT MINSTER MAY GIVE DU A TURN DOWN IF MATTER IS HURRIED. TECHNICAL ASPECTS DO NOT SEEM TO BE AN OBSTACLE. UK IS MOST ANXIOUS TO COORDINATE CLOSELY WITH US AND FRG ON THIS MATTER. END SUMMARY.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 LONDON 14814 01 OF 02 132207Z

2. STATE-DEFENSE BRIEFING TEAM MET WITH MOD OFFICIALS AFTERNOON SEP 13 ON QUESTION OF A-10 STABALLOY MUNITIONS. ON US SIDE WERE MG RUSSELL, USAF DSC PLANS;1 MG NORRIS, 3RDAF; CHARLES THOMAS, EUR/RPM; COL JENKS, DATT; COL WALBRECHT, 3RDAF; AND PETER SOMMERS; EMBASSY POL-MIL. FROM MOD WERE JOHN MAYNE, ASST UNDERSECRETARY

OF STATE (AIR STAFF); WILLIAM PERRY, HEAD DS-8 (UK MINI-ISA); DR. W.N. SAXBY, MOD DIRECTOR SCIENCE-3 UNDER THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISOR OFFICE; ANDREW WARD, DS-8.

3. BRIEFING: MEETING WAS HELD IN TWO SESSIONS. FIRST DEALT ALMOST ENTIRELY WITH POLITICAL ISSUES. GROUP THEN SPLIT. EXPERTS MET TO RESOLVE UNANSWERED TECHNICAL QUESTIONS WITH SAXBY (SEPTEL FROM DATT); AND MAYNE TOOK THOMAS, NORRIS AND JENKS TO MEET WITH DEPUTY UNDER SEC (RAF) JOHN NELSON.

4. UK ASSESSMENT OF SITUATION: MAYNE LED OFF FIRST MEETING BY NOTING THAT WHEN HE PRESENTED ISSUE, MIN STATE FOR DEFENCE, DR. JOHN GILBERT DID NOT OVERREACT BUT NOTED ISSUE WOULD BE DELICATE MATTER FOR A GOVERNMENT WITH A MINORITY IN COMMONS, GENERAL ELECTION THAT MIGHT STILL COME AS EARLY AS NOVEMBER, AND A SIGNIFICANT LEFT WING IN THE LABOR PARTY. NEVERTHELESS, ASSESSMENT WAS THAT IF MATTER WERE WELL-STAFFED AND PUT "GENTLY" TO THE MINISTERS, IT WAS LIKELY THAT THEY WOULD GET ON BOARD.

5. PREVIOUS MOD COMMITMENTS: MG NORRIS POINTED OUT THAT MOD HAD RESPONDED POSITIVELY TO HIS APRIL 78 WRITTEN REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO DEPLOY A-10 DU AMMO. MAYNE SAID A LOWER ECHELON HAD MADE AN ERROR IN NOT BUCKING THE SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 LONDON 14814 01 OF 02 132207Z

MATTER TO THE POLITICAL LEVEL. FACT WAS, SAID MAYNE, THAT WHETHER MOD HAD COMMITTED ITSELF OF NOT, MINISTERS DURING HEAT OF ELECTION CAMPAIGN WOULD NOT HESITATE TO DISOWN THE ACTION AS NOT PROPERLY CLEARED, AND PERHAPS GO FURTHER BY STATING THAT NOT ONLY WAS PERMISSION INCORRECTLY GIVEN, BUT DU MUNITIONS WOULD NEITHER NOW NOR IN THE FUTURE BE ALLOWED TO ENTER THE UK. MAYNE SAID IT WOULD BE UNWISE FOR THE US TO ATTEMPT TO USE THE EXISTENCE OF THIS WRITTEN APPROVAL IN OUR EFFORTS TO MOVE AHEAD WITH DEPLOYMENT OF THE MUNITIONS.

6. FUTURE PROCESS: AS MAYNE SAW IT, THE NECESSARY STEPS TO SMOOTH THE WAY FOR STABALLOY MUNITIONS WOULD TAKE A MONTH AND REQUIRE THE FOLLOWING:

- CLEAN UP REMAINING TECH DATA QUESTIONS
- CONSULT OFFICIALLY WITH OTHER GOVERNMENT DEPTS.
- CLEAR WITH DEFENCE MINISTER, WHO WILL THEN CIRCULATE NOTE TO COLLEAGUES.
- PM WILL HAVE TO GIVE FINAL GO AHEAD BECAUSE OF POLITICAL SENSITIVITY. MAYNE SAID PM WOULD BE NO PROBLEM, BUT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO GET CABINET ON BOARD FIRST.

7. US REPLY: OUR SIDE REPLIED THAT WE UNDERSTOOD UK

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SECRET

PAGE 01 LONDON 14814 02 OF 02 132206Z
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S E C R E T SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 14814

POLITICAL SENSITIVITIES, BUT MOD SHOULD BE AWARE OF DANGER OF DISCLOSURE BEFORE UK'S PROPOSED PROCESS COMPLETED. WE EMPHASIZED THAT ISSUE WAS REACHING POLITICAL LEVELS IN BONN, WHICH ENHANCED LEAK POSSIBILITIES, THAT A TURN-AROUND OF THE SHIP COULD WELL ATTRACT PRESS ATTENTION, THAT WE HAD ALREADY HAD TWO PRESS QUERIES AT STATE, AND THAT IF FRG AND UK GOT OUT OF STEP ON PRESS GUIDANCE, DISCLOSURE OF PLANNED UK DEPLOYMENT WAS ALMOST CERTAIN. MAYNE RESPONDED BY SAYING THAT MOD MIGHT BE ABLE TO CUT PROCESS DOWN TO 15 DAYS -- IF ALL WENT WELL. MAYNE THOUGHT THERE MIGHT BE SOME POSSIBILITIES FOR SHORT-CIRCUITING THE CLEARANCE PROCEDURE BY GETTING THE ISSUE BEFORE A REGULAR INTER-AGENCY GROUP..

8. LATER, IN PRIVATE SESSION WITH NELSON, MAYNE IN HIS EXPOSITION OF CURRENT STATE OF PLAY FAITHFULLY AND
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 LONDON 14814 02 OF 02 132206Z

FORCEFULLY REPEATED OUR POINTS ON THE NEED FOR AN EARLY AND CONTROLLED PRESS BRIEFING -- WHILE NOT AT THE SAME TIME INDICATING HE AGREED WITH THEM.

9. BOTH MAYNE AND NELSON UNDERLINED THEIR DESIRE TO BE KEPT FULLY INFORMED OF THE FRG POSITION. THEY SPECIFICALLY ASKED FOR QUICK READ-OUT ON BRIEFING TEAM'S (NOW-CANCELLED) SEP 14 MEETING WITH GERMANS.

10. COMMENT: TONE OF MEETING MADE IT CLEAR AGAIN THAT MOD IS ON BOARD AND WISHES TO BE HELPFUL. WHERE US AND UK DIVERGE IS ON ASSESSMENT OF RELATIVE RISK INVOLVED IN HOLDING UP CONTROLLED PRESS RELEASE VERSUS CAREFUL SHEPHERDING OF MATTER THROUGH CABINET. WE BELIEVE MOD WILL MAKE REAL EFFORT TO MEET A 15 DAY DEADLINE, BUT DECISION BY SEP 16 IS CATEGORICALLY OUT. QUESTION OF HOW TO PLAY SHIP ARRIVAL WAS LEFT OPEN PENDING FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN BONN. TEAM REASSURED MOD THAT ANYTHING US UNDERTAKES IN THIS AREA WILL BE CAREFULLY COORDINATED WITH AFFECTED ALLIES. EMBASSY WILL FOLLOW UP REMAINING TECHNICAL POINTS AND CONTINUE TO URGE MOD TO MOVE SPEEDILY ON OBTAINING POLITICAL GO AHEAD.
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